

ECAGP



**Environmental
Community
Advocates of
Galena Park**

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ECAGP's mission is to
provide education and
training that will enhance
the environmental quality
of life for residents of
Galena Park.

January 31, 2011

Miguel I. Flores, Division Director
US EPA REGION 6
1445 Ross Avenue
Suite 1200
Mail Code: 6WQ
Dallas, TX 75202-2733

Dear Director Flores,

On behalf of Environmental Community Advocates of Galena Park (ECAGP), Pleasantville Environmental Coalition, Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (TEJAS) and Air Alliance Houston, I come to you, as the president of ECAGP and a resident of Harris County, to ask for your assistance in investigating an environmental concern. Together as residents of Harris County, we are concerned about the ongoing practice of storing dredged material from the Houston Ship Channel and the Trinity-San Jacinto River Coastal Basins into pits located near environmental justice communities, in particular, the Clinton Disposal site and the House, Stimson and Glendale Tracts.

All of these placement areas are owned by the Port of Houston Authority. Because of the complexity of this autonomous governmental entity, we feel that our efforts would be best served by the Environmental Protection Agency to determine the need for investigation of the sites as possible public health concerns. Our communities, in particular, Galena Park, Jacinto City and Pleasantville, are already burdened with the pollution from local heavy industry and major transportation corridors concentrated in and around the Houston Ship Channel. The dredge waste sites are in close proximity to nearly 25,000 people. The uncertainty of the possible dangers of contaminated sediment stored next to homes, schools, churches and public parks is a concern that has for far too long been left unanswered.

Galena Park, incorporated in 1935, is situated on the eastern boundary of the City of Houston and north of the Houston Ship Channel. The population according to the 2000 US Census is 10,592 with 69.3% Hispanic and 7.8% African-American. Jacinto City, incorporated in 1947, is directly north of Galena Park. Its population according to the 2000 US Census is 10,302 with a predominantly Hispanic population at approximately 75%. The Clinton Disposal Site is the largest dredged material placement area and is located between Galena Park and Jacinto City. This site was purchased by the Port of Houston Authority (POHA) around 1929 and received its first dredge materials in 1938. Adjacent to this site's southeast corner is a Little League baseball park. This actively used pit is unlined and has been elevated in height throughout the years. During Hurricane Ike in 2008 the Clinton site flooded residences located on its southern side.

Adjacent and directly west of the Clinton site and located inside Houston's city limits are the active POH dredged material placement areas named House Tract and Stimson Tract. The POH Glendale Tract, further west, has not been active since 1960. These tracts are near Pleasantville, a predominantly African-American Houston neighborhood (85%) with a population of around 3400. In 1961 when Hurricane Carla hit the Texas Gulf Coast, residences along the Glendale Tract were flooded with mud from inside the pit.

In November 2010, with the help of our partner environmental organization Air Alliance Houston, we began our own investigation to learn the history of these pits – the contents, sources, any testing for contaminants and how the material is monitored. We contacted the Environmental Section of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and learned that permits are issued to the U.S. Army Corps and the Port of Houston Authority to dispose into the site. We do not know when the Port of Houston Authority first started testing their dredged materials, but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers started testing theirs in the 1970s. We learned there are no standards for sediment but that the Corps currently tests for 90 criteria pollutants. According to the Corps, the test results are forwarded to the TCEQ Water Quality Division.

We then contacted the TCEQ Water Quality Division and learned about Section 10 Permits and Section 404 permits. We also learned that TCEQ Water division does not normally test dredging material unless requested. TCEQ was not aware of test results from the U.S. Corps.

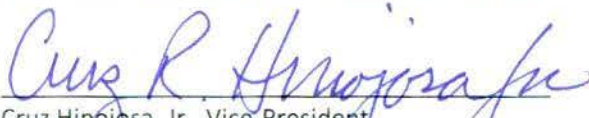
Air Alliance Houston subsequently requested lab analyses from the Port of Houston for the last ten years of the dredged materials placed into the Clinton site. The reports we received list a multitude of pesticides, PCBs, dioxins, heavy metals, and semivolatile and volatile organics. Needless to say, the lists of contaminants are daunting, and we feel the only recourse is to turn to the EPA Water Office for information and clarification. Lab analysis reports have been forwarded to the Ecosystems Protection Branch but to date we have not been contacted by a representative.

As residents and concerned citizens of Harris County, we need to know and should know what toxins are actually present in these placement sites, and if these contaminants pose a danger to public health, especially for residents of Galena Park, Jacinto City and Pleasantville. We ask together that EPA seriously consider our request for an assessment of the Clinton, House, Stimson and Glendale sites.

Yours truly,



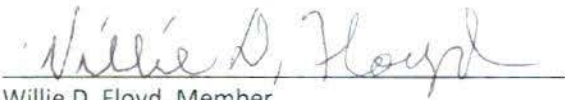
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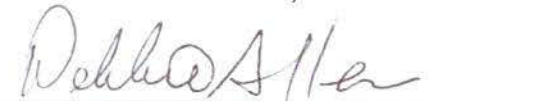
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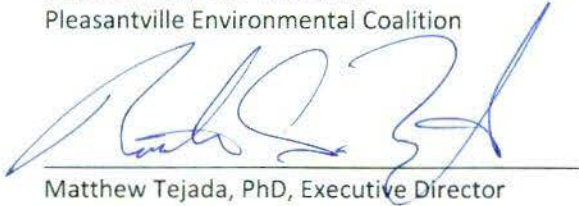
Una Topps, Member
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Debbie Allen, Vice-President
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Matthew Tejada, PhD, Executive Director
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Juan Parras, Executive Director
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cc: Samuel Coleman, Division Director, EPA Superfund Division, 6SF